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[1](#)B. 09 ADDIS ABABA 2981
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This message is from USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: With less than three weeks to go before the start of the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa, several predictable and recurring themes will take center stage: the crises in Somalia and Sudan, the unconstitutional changes of power in Guinea and Madagascar, and the constitutional manipulation in Niger. Leadership of the AU Assembly of heads of state also is still very much up in the air with continuing speculation over whether Libyan Leader Moammar Qadhafi will seek unprecedented re-election to a second term as AU Assembly Chairperson. According to the AU's regional rotation, southern Africa's candidate, Malawian President Bingu wa Mutharika, should succeed Qadhafi. This much is certain: once the dust settles, the AU will have a new flag designed by an Ethiopian artist. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The bi-annual AU Summit begins January 25 with a two-day meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), followed by a two-day meeting of foreign ministers from January 28-29, and climaxing with the heads of state meeting in the Assembly of the Union from January 31-February [1](#)2. The earlier meetings will develop reports and recommendations for the meeting of the Assembly, as well as endorse a number of protocols and proposals developed through the previous six months. The heads of state usually accept those recommendations as presented.

[1](#)3. (U) Heads of state will devote their first day of deliberations to the official theme of the Summit, "Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Africa: Challenges and Prospects for Development." Hamadoun Toure, Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union, and Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank, have

been invited to speak on this occasion. If recent AU Summits are any indication, official themes typically take a back seat to more pressing crises on the continent.

Leadership for 2010

¶4. (SBU) Even before the African heads of state turn their attention to ICT issues on the continent, they will go into closed session to elect a Chairperson for 2010. As noted in reftels, the question of succession is very much open to debate. If the AU's regional rotation is respected, Malawian President Mutharika will inherit the mantle from Qadhafi, but no one is ruling out a Qadhafi bid for re-election. The least that can be said is that heads of state will vote for what is in their individual national interest. Observers of the process, including representatives from some AU member states, assume that Qadhafi can buy his re-election, though many support honoring the current rotational system. (Comment: USAU would appreciate knowing whether the Department plans to follow up with select African heads of state regarding their position on Qadhafi's re-election. End Comment.) If Qadhafi remains in office for another term, it will permit him to pursue his agenda of greater regional economic and political integration on the continent.

Sudan

¶5. (SBU) At the Summit a year ago, AU Commission Chairperson

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Jean Ping hinted at the creation of a panel of eminent persons who would investigate the Darfur issue and make recommendations for a comprehensive solution, including reconciliation, justice, and peace. That panel, chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, has since carried out its mandate and the AU has asked Mbeki to continue leading the implementation phase of his report's recommendations, which include steps toward a peaceful resolution to the Darfur conflict and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). While Ping and the AU may take credit for bringing the process along, no one imagines that the road to the general elections this year will be easy. Ping reportedly expects a contentious split of Sudan. In December, Ping and Mbeki met with UN officials in New York and issued an urgent appeal to the international community to support the ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict in Darfur, fully implement the CPA, democratize Sudan, and normalize Sudan's relations with its neighbors.

Somalia

¶6. (SBU) Twelve months ago, freshly elected Somali Transitional Federal Government President Sheikh Sharif was given a standing ovation when he entered the plenary session. A year later, the AU leadership is even more concerned about the lack of progress on both the political and security fronts in Somalia as well as lukewarm UN support. The December 4 suicide bomb in a Mogadishu hotel that killed more than 50 people, including three government ministers, was one of several important setbacks for the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and international efforts to address the Somali crisis. AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping's repeated appeals to AU member states to contribute troops to AMISOM have gone unanswered, leaving the Burundian and Ugandan battalions to protect TFG institutions and key installations, such as the seaport and airport in Mogadishu. AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra continues to call on the UN to prepare for an eventual takeover of the peacekeeping role in Somalia. There is no doubt that the AU leadership will appeal to the United States and other partners to bring more resources to bear in the fight against al-Shabaab. In this regard, a major development since the July 2009 AU Summit in Libya has been the UN Security

Council's decision in December to impose sanctions on Eritrea for its role in funding and training al-Shabaab fighters in Somalia.

Coups and Constitutional Manipulations

¶7. (SBU) The AU's record in responding to unconstitutional changes of government and manipulations of the constitution has been mixed. AU leaders take partial credit for helping Mauritania restore constitutional order, although in the process the democratically elected Mauritanian President was permanently ousted from power, and the general who led the coup, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, resigned from the military to run for president and won. Guinea-Bissau recovered from the November 2008 assassination of its president by holding elections in July 2009 that international observers said took place without major incident. From our discussions with AU officials, it appears that there will not be any attempt to censure Niger's President Mamadou Tandja for manipulating his country's constitution in order to extend his mandate. Similarly, the Summit likely will not dwell on either Zimbabwe or the Great Lakes Region, two thorny issues that have not received the level of attention this past year that Guinea or Madagascar have. Recognizing the need for more coherent guidelines on the AU's response to unconstitutional changes in government, including sanctions, the AU Peace and

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Security Council met in Swaziland December 17-19 and drafted a framework that it will present at the Summit.

¶8. (SBU) The International Contact Group on Madagascar (ICG-M), which met in Addis Ababa on January 6, agreed that free, fair, and transparent elections offer the only way to return Madagascar to constitutional order (Ref A). How and when to hold such elections, however, remain a bone of contention among ICG-M members. While the French delegation advocated conditional support for Andry Rajoelina's election plan, the U.S. and others object to Rajoelina's disengagement from the mediation process and unilateral actions, and insist on the need to return to inclusive dialogue before planning elections. Following Ping's imminent trip to Antananarivo to try to unblock the current stalemate, and Madagascar's response to the ICG-M's recommendations (requested by January 25), the margins of the AU Summit will provide a forum for high-level discussions to continue on the way forward in Madagascar. An ICG on Guinea is scheduled for January 26 in Addis Ababa and may give the AU an opportunity to help put Conakry back on the path to constitutional order.

New AU Flag

¶9. (U) In the midst of this very loaded AU Summit agenda, Africa's leaders are expected to adopt a new flag for their organization. An Ethiopian artist is said to have submitted the winning design for the new flag, but the AU has kept the design a closely guarded secret.

USAU Takes on Expanded Role

¶10. (U) Ambassador Carson: The USAU and bilateral missions warmly welcome you and your delegation to the AU Summit. USAU has accepted a major challenge for 2010 by agreeing to serve as the AU Partners Group chairperson. In this role, USAU will serve as the AU Commission's primary liaison with the international partners group and thus assure even more access to the AU's senior leaders. USAU will continue to facilitate U.S. engagement with the AU by accompanying senior AU officials to Washington for meetings when appropriate, coordinating visits of USG officials to Addis Ababa for International Contact Group meetings sponsored by the AU, and managing USG participation at the biannual AU Summits (the

June/July 2010 Summit will be in Kampala).

MUSHINGI